

**General Assembly of Unitarian  
& Free Christian Churches**

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Essex Hall, London**

**Present:** Robert Ince (Convenor), Marion Baker, Joan Cook, Philip Colfox, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Gwynn Pritchard, Jacky Woodman.

**In Attendance:** Dot Hewerdine (General Assembly President ), David Joseph (Finance Manager) for Session 1 item 9, Rev Daniel Costley for Session 2 item 10, Derek McAuley (Chief Officer) and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

**Friday**

**Session 1**

*Opening Devotions: Robert read from "Through the Prism" a book written by Lucy Harris and Tony McNeile – "Self in Community"*

**1. Apologies**

Rev Lynne Readett, Jacky Woodman (for Friday morning) and Dot Hewerdine (for Saturday morning)

**2. Appointment of EC Convenor**

As the longest serving member Joan took the chair for the appointment of a Convenor for 2016 – 2017. Robert Ince was unanimously re-appointed as EC Convenor for the year 2016 – 2017.

**3. Minutes of the meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016 (DOC EC30/16)**

The Minutes were signed as an accurate record of the EC meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

**4. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later discussion:**

Item 13 page 5 – Philip raised the two issues identified by the Rev John Harley at the previous EC Meeting. It was noted that an event was being held supported by the Nightingale Centre on improved marketing of the Youth Programme.

**5. EC Action List (DOC EC31/16)**

Reviewed and updated.

**6. Co-option of EC member (DOC EC32/16)**

The Executive Committee decided not to make an appointment.

**7. Strategy Group Updates**

LLSG will be holding a teleconference on the 21 May 2016 to review their programme of work which Marion would be attending.

It was recognised that the role of the Strategy Groups in relationship to the 15 “Next Steps” projects should be reviewed. It was accepted that the Strategy Groups were actually working at an operational level and this would continue however the term “Strategy” Group was no longer appropriate.

**8. Nightingale Centre Minutes - (DOC EC33/16) – noted with the following:**

The marketing and social media event to be held by the Youth Programme will be from the 16 – 18 September 2016 and the Nightingale Centre has made 12 places available. EC thanked the Nightingale Centre Management Committee for undertaking this venture with the Youth Department. It was noted that their strong financial position enabled such support to be given to Unitarian initiatives.

Improvements in IT were underway including room-master which has the capacity to link in with the computer systems currently in use.

The rebuilding of the roundhouse was being supported by the Peak District National Park in seeking a Heritage Lottery Grant for repairs. Proposals for Barleycroft were being developed.

**9. (10am) Management Accounts and Investment Report - (DOC EC34/16) – noted with the following:**

(David Joseph – new Finance Manager attended)

David was introduced and welcomed by the EC. Issues raised in the management accounts to the 29 February 2016 were discussed. The Outlook showed a year end deficit of £32,439 as no legacy was expected and quota would be less than budgeted. This would be refined for the next meeting. Diversification of income is important. It was noted that the Annual Meetings were likely to make a modest surplus but the accounts had not yet been finalised.

The Chief Officer reported that Essex Hall Trust is in a healthy financial position with full occupancy of the building and he expected increased support to be forthcoming at their AGM. The Chief Officer thanked David for attending the meeting.

The Hon Treasurer gave a presentation on the position with Investments and his view of the services currently provided by the Investment Manager. The

money received from the Bowland Trust was temporarily invested and would be available for re-investment on 7 June 2016.

He recommended the development of:

1. A five year strategy for the Vision plans and investment.
2. We seek a full discretionary investment management service.
3. Cash-flow forecasting on a weekly/monthly basis would be required.

The Chief Officer suggested that an independent financial adviser specialising in the charity sector could be used to support the review process, In the meantime a decision needed to be made quickly on investment of the new

funds. It was agreed that once cash-flow projections were available that a decision be made by the Honorary Treasurer and Chief Officer on the amount to be invested.

The Convenor thanked the Hon Treasurer for his presentation.

## **Session 2**

### **10. Ministry Training – agreeing a common vision (DOC EC35/16) – noted with the following:** (Rev Daniel Costley attended).

The President and Marion Baker declared their interest as committee members of Unitarian College Manchester (the latter as a General Assembly representative).

Daniel reported in progress with the MSG's review of ministry training. Both UCM and HMCO had mapped their training against the ministerial competencies and identified gaps. "Next Steps" had several priorities affecting ministry training. Independent accreditation on the Unitarian studies elements was required and possibilities could be explored by the external consultant. He asked that the EC affirm its commitment to work closely with the two Colleges as the two continuing providers and co-ordinators of ministerial training or alternatively be explicit about the possibility of moving to another mode of training.

It was noted that the Competencies would evolve the needs of congregations change but that they needed to be embedded in current arrangements. Each college had its strengths, therefore we should be working collaboratively. The need to ensure ongoing feedback on the quality and relevance of the training was recognised.

It was agreed to continue to work collaboratively with the two Colleges and to broaden and deepen our relationship. The General Assembly will encourage them in filling any gaps in the competencies, utilising outside providers as needed.

EC agreed to the appointment of Kay Millard to the Ministry Strategy Group (MSG).

The Convenor thanked Daniel for attending the meeting.

## **11. Annual Meetings**

### **11.1 Survey feedback and discussion - (DOC EC36/16) – noted with the following:**

The Survey Methods results were received which were very similar to the previous year. There was a strong feeling that the Meetings should be more

inspirational rather than business orientated. It was noted that social media was more in use this year than previous years. Different views of the social evening remained with some people wanting a quiet place to sit and chat and others the lively music and dancing. The hotel was extremely busy with the other user groups.

### **11.2 Annual Meeting panel minutes 11 Feb 2016 - (DOC EC37/16) – noted with the following:**

An Annual Meeting Panel meeting took place on Thursday 12 May 2016. Rev Sarah Tinker has agreed to be the preacher at the Anniversary Service in 2017. A keynote speaker had been identified and was being invited.

### **11.3 Resolutions**

**(DOC EC38/16)**

The Resolutions approved at the Annual Meetings were reviewed and an update on actions received:

- CIO status – referred to the Constitutional Review Committee.
- Constitutional Changes – reported to the Charity Commission by the Chief Officer and reply awaited.
- Surveillance – Chief Officer and Penal Affairs Panel members are attending the Liberty AGM on Saturday 18 June 2016.
- Syria Appeal – an update on financial contributions is to be obtained from the Red Cross.
- Climate Change – Buildings Advisory Group is to circulate to congregations in the next Mailing an Annual Energy Consumption Form for completion.

## **Session 3**

### **12. Presidents Report - (DOC EC44/16) – noted with the following:**

The President noted that since her report she had attended the Scottish Unitarian Association AGM, taken a service in Glasgow and had attended the Asparagus lunch in Evesham.



**14.6 UNIFEST/PUFF/Family Fest -(DOC EC42/16) – noted with the following:**

A proposal was received from Lorna Hill and Rev John Harley. It was noted that this issue had been raised when the EC met at the Nightingale Centre Management Committee meeting in September 2015. It was suggested that at this stage a more detailed proposal was required with more discussion on the practicalities and costings with the Nightingale Centre and that the Foy Society might be interested in being involved. **Action: Chief Officer to reply.**

**Session 4**

**15. Vision Next Steps - continued**

The Next Steps – a lengthy discussion took place to identify the key outcomes or objectives expected for each priority:

<p><b>1.</b>Develop a comprehensive response to explain our identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to explain in a simple way in different circumstances who are we, what do we believe in</li> <li>• The Liberal Vision</li> <li>• Be able to promote identity Internally as well externally</li> <li>• The end product would be us being better known to the outside world</li> <li>• Must work nationally and at a personal level</li> <li>• We want the world to know who we are</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.</b>Support a web based spiritual learning resource with UCM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachel Skelton at UCM has purchased various “thespacetosearch” names</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b>Engage with the wider community on today’s issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change “today’s” to “Spiritual”. issues</li> <li>• The end product would be congregations engaging with social issues from a spiritual perspective working with their local communities</li> <li>• How to guide</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.</b>Increase collaboration with other like minded organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social action – are we having an impact, is the world a better place because of what we have done?</li> <li>• Develop a “toolkit” to help people move from a non-collaborative perspective to collaboration</li> <li>• The benefit is that we share platforms with other organisations</li> <li>• Reputation Capital – capitalise on the reputation we build.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.</b>Promote more Unitarian thought and writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the development of Unitarian thought requires time and space to think and write</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lindsey Press and Unitarian publications are avenues – how do we going increase their profile? People are supported in their writing eg sabbaticals, development opportunities</li> <li>• Think about creating a writers group – (contact Louise Rogers)</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b> Formulate a plan to undertake Campus Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure is people involved in campuses not in congregations</li> <li>• Collaborate with and learn from UUA.</li> <li>• Keep in mind that you are sowing seeds.</li> <li>• Recognising that Unitarian values are the important thing.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b> Support a new congregational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 2020 objectives but with increased involvement. and integration</li> <li>• Bigger congregations helping smaller congregations</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b> Grow our volunteer pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have enough people with the right skills to step in and run with projects</li> <li>• Systems and processes encourage and develop volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b> Find more flexible ways of training for Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on student needs</li> <li>• Maintaining quality at all levels</li> <li>• Encourage more people to train for ministry both professional and lay</li> <li>• Training provision is recognized and accredited and is sustainable</li> </ul>
<b>10.</b> Develop and integrate different forms of ministerial training (including recognised lay ministry training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accredited Lay Ministry training, not just for professional ministers</li> <li>• The quality of students is high</li> <li>• Integrated model of training</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b> Work with the Districts to create a new forum for national involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome will be the new forum working</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b> Understand and reduce threats to building and financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand where we are and define what we mean by sustainability</li> <li>• Action plans to address issues that are identified</li> </ul>
<b>13.</b> Review the effectiveness of our organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcome is an organization that is fit for purpose</li> </ul>
<b>14.</b> Update “Help is at Hand” as an on-line resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the “Help is at Hand” document</li> <li>• Ensure mechanisms are in place to keep it up to date</li> <li>• Need to integrate the “help for Officers” with “Help is at hand” on GA website with a link to the Safeguarding document</li> <li>• Need officer training</li> </ul>
<b>15.</b> Reduce our carbon footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out at some level what our current carbon footprint is</li> <li>• Compare ourselves to the Church of England and others</li> <li>• Improve performance</li> </ul>

**16. Non – responsive check out**

*Closing Devotions – Joan read from “The Fields of Promise” written by V. Emil Gudmundson*

**Saturday**

**Session 5**

*Opening Devotions: Jacky read a poem “Breathing Underwater” by Jared Mackey*

**17. Role of Vice-President - (DOC EC43/16) – noted with the following:**

Rev John Clifford had produced a paper on his reflections on the role of the GA Vice-President. He suggested re-titling the post as President elect. This view was generally welcomed although this would require a change to the Constitution and could be addressed as part of the move to a CIO. **Action: Chief Officer to respond to Rev John Clifford**

**18. Chief Officer Report - (DOC EC45/16) – noted with the following:**

C C Grundy Trust

**EC agreed to appoint Councillor Chris Henig as a Trustee, nominated by the Lancashire County Council.**

**19. EC Link Reports - (DOC EC46/16) - noted with the following:**

- Northern – it was noted that the Vision document was mentioned more than eight times during the course of a recent meeting. They valued the visits from the GA President.
- Sheffield – reported that there is a lack of volunteers and they have not managed to appoint a secretary. Churches in the District are doing fine.
- Midlands – the AGM on 26 March was attended by Jacky. Very active District with a sense of mission and purpose and a District Minister.
- North East Lancashire – Jacky had informed them she would be stepping down when she leaves EC. It is essential that a new link EC member is appointed who is able to regularly attend meetings recognising that there was not support for the vision process nor engagement with the EC.
- East Cheshire Union – It was decided at their AGM that all future meetings will take place in the evening. Marion will not be able to attend all of these meetings because of the travelling involved over the Winter months.
- Wales – Gwynn outlined the current levels of engagement across the two Districts and also the Bangor group. He suggested that the Welsh

Department Secretary should be involved in discussions about the new District forum. It was agreed at the extra-ordinary meeting held on 28 April 2016 that the two Districts will lead the Opening Celebrations at the 2017 Annual Meetings.

- Overall there was a view that the EC would have to review the link role when the District forum was up-and-running to avoid duplication.

## Session 6

### Vision - continued

The Chief Officer handed round a template for “Next Step” priorities. This will be sent to the EC leads for completion and will then form the basis of a plan for the July EC and project management for the future.

<b>Summary Priority Title</b>	
<b>Description of the Priority (purpose)</b>	
<b>Current Position/Context</b>	
<b>How will be success be measured?</b>	
<b>Key areas of work to be undertaken</b>	
<b>Timescales</b>	
<b>Links to current work or other priorities</b>	
<b>Who needs to be involved?</b>	
<b>Who will take the work forward?</b>	
<b>What are the future financial implications?</b>	
<b>What are the future staffing implications?</b>	
<b>What are the future volunteer implications?</b>	
<b>Policies and guidelines required</b>	
<b>Communications implications</b>	
<b>Theological and/or spiritual implications</b>	
<b>Notes</b>	
<b>Form completed by</b>	
<b>Date completed</b>	

Gwynn suggested that a new 20 minute film be commissioned aimed at non-Unitarians people following the success of the “Vision: Next Steps.” It was agreed that a technical specification would be drawn up by Gwynn and Peter and a procurement process then take place with individuals and/or companies invited to put forward bids.

Joan had contacted people at the Annual Meetings and compiled a list of contact details of people willing to take part in campus Ministry. There has been discussion with Geoff Levermore of Manchester District and there was

also interest in Cambridge and Glasgow. She was encouraged. **Action: Joan agreed to send the template to those interested to gather initial material and to report to the July EC meeting.**

Marion indicated that the new forum for national involvement working with Districts would engage Districts in national decision making and dialogue.

2020 Group priority **Action: The Chief Officer to ask the 2020 Leadership Group to complete the template**

Philip asked what would this look like when it is completed? It was agreed that when the EC member has finished completing their forms they should circulate amongst each other for comment but ensure that the completed forms are with Mary-Jean by 28 June at the latest.

The Convenor reported that the UCM Management Committee fully endorsed the direction the GA are moving with the Web-project and their involvement and will put resources towards it. It is yet to be resolved where the responsibilities will lie between the General Assembly and UCM.

## **20. Key Messages to be circulated separately**

**21. Confidential Items** – Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point

### 21.1 Pay Policy

The following pay policy was agreed:

“Staff remuneration is set to reflect the following criteria:

Fairness – this criteria is used to ensure that salaries take into account levels of inflation and remain in line with the voluntary sector more generally. Whilst there is no London weighting, consideration has to be taken of pressures facing staff based at Essex Hall including the London living wage. The relationship between the highest and lowest paid staff will be not more than 4:1 ratio (as with the Religious Society of Friends).

Affordability – the overall financial position of the General Assembly and its ability to pay will be considered to assess the collective impact of any proposed salary increase

Staff salaries are reviewed annually at the May Executive Committee meeting and implemented from 1 July each year.

Levels of pay for individual posts will be reviewed when new staff positions are established or as part of the recruitment and selection process for each post reflecting requirements of the job description and person specification.”

21.2 Staff remuneration – the Chief Officer left the meeting at this point

Staff were awarded a salary increase of 1% from 1 July 2016.

**22. Non responsive check-out**

*Closing Devotions – Gwynn read a meditation “Tributaries” by the Rev Cen Llwyd.*